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ABSTRACT

Based on case studies of the impact of declining enrollments during the 1976-77 school year in each of 9 rural Illinois school districts, this paper addresses the following: enrollment decline in smaller cities across the nation, with particular emphasis on Illinois; demographic characteristics of the east central region of Illinois, with particular emphasis on declining student enrollment; the process of small school district maramus in east central Illinois and the linkage between this process and small community politics; and one way of interpreting the consolidation of smaller school districts. The maramus process (a concept meaning a wasting away) is outlined as follows: administrative recognition of declining enrollment; initial search behavior by administrators; administrative generation of policy alternatives; superintendent/school board discussion; school board controlled public discussion; school board meeting; school board decision; continued declining enrollments; superintendent/board discussions about alternatives; public acrimony over the closing of a school and consolidation with another district; school board meeting to close the school and consolidate the district. This paper suggests, then, a generalized model of events in the districts examined; wherein, small community politics plays an important role in the determination of community problem solving. (JC)

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Declining Enrollments and Small Rural Cities and Districts: An Exploratory Analysis[1/]

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Declining Enrollments and Smaller Rural Cities and Districts: An Exploratory Analysis

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This paper explores some effects produced by declining enrollments in nine Midwestern school districts. These districts are either small, isolated rural cities or rural agrarian areas. Case studies of the impact of declining enrollments were conducted during the 1976-77 school year in each district.

While there are differences in some districts, the paper suggests a generalized model of events in these districts. This model notes that early administrative awareness and decline-related economic deprivation influence administrator efforts to secure school board action. The initial response by the school board is dominated by administratively controlled economic considerations. However, reactions by elements of the community to visible signs of declining enrollments, e.g., course and/or extra-curricular reduction and school site closing, produce sharp, frequently rancorous conflict in the community. Issues arise over topics such as the long-term fate of the community, the courses or activities to be stopped or sites to be closed, the expertise of administrative cost-accounting and population projecting, the administrator's appreciation of community life-styles and the consequences for students' educational chances if school activities are reduced.

The paper concludes with suggestions for further research.

Any effort to chronicle the impact of declining enrollments on small rural cities and districts must begin with not one but two caveat emptors. First, this is not a report describing and analyzing the discovery of declining enrollments in small rural cities and districts. In fact, what this paper reports is that the prevailing theme of rural and small city educational policy-making has been and remains the continuous confrontation of these districts with efforts to consolidate them into larger districts. The spectre of losing local schools and/or districts is not new, but an everpresent threat to small rural cities and localities.

Second, the values which drive participants in these contests are not new to American society. Those who seek to consolidate districts do so in the name of equality; they believe small schools not only economically inefficient but also inferior in creating educational opportunities for students which are essential to improving American society at large. Opponents of consolidation regard these mandated equalities as governmental interferences on personal freedoms and a blow to incentives such as stability and continuity. Despite the fact that stability and continuity, for example, may result in unequal distributions of fortune or opportunity, proponents believe small is beautiful.

This paper begins by exploring briefly the decline in smaller districts across the nation and more particularly in Illinois. The second section presents materials on the east central region of Illinois, with particular emphasis on declining student enrollment. The third, and longest section, describes the process of small school districts maramus in east central Illinois and links this process to materials on small community politics. The final section posits one way of interpreting the consolidation of smaller school districts.

The Decline of Small School Districts

The decline in the number of small school districts at the national level is well documented. In the National Center for Education Statistics publication entitled Social Economic Characteristics of U.S. School Districts, 1970, users are cautioned that:

> . . . summary data were not prepared for school districts with enrollments of less than 300. The excluded districts (those with enrollments below 300) comprise less than 2 percent of the total U.S. enrollment, but they are, nonetheless, significant in the Great Plains.2/

Not only are these districts a distinct minority, they have declined rapidly in number in the last two decades. As illustrated in Table 1, in the 1960s while the total number of school districts declined 53%, these smaller school districts

Insert Table 1 about here

disappeared at a rate of 208% (24,539 to 5,112). While in 1961-62, two of every three districts enrolled less than 300 pupils, by 1971-72 less than one of every three districts did. Finally, if one excludes these small districts from 1960-61 to 1970-71, the decline in school districts was only 360 (12,486 to 12,126).

In Illinois the major consolidations, however, happened earlier in the 1940s and 1950s when the state did away with the one room township elementary school. In 1940-41 there were 11,282 elementary districts; in 1950-51, 3,771 elementary districts; and, in 1960 there were 960 operating elementary districts.3/ Despite this massive wave of reorganization, Illinois has maintained large numbers of school districts. In 1960-61, Illinois had 1,548 operating school districts, and in 1971-72 there were 1,143 operating districts--a decline of 26% during that decade accounted for almost completely by reorganization of elementary school districts. In 1975, Illinois had 1,042 operating school districts with 56.8% (592) enrolling less than 1000 pupils.4/ Despite a prevailing ethos of local control, consolidations have been a part of Illinois school politics since the 1940s.

The Context of East Central Illinois

East central Illinois is the antithesis of isolated rural poverty. Those who live in areas defined by population density as rural in this part of Illinois are neither geographically isolated, far from major interstate routes, nor extremely low on the income scale. The plains are dotted with small settlements, often consisting of a grain elevator, a bank, a cafe, a service station and a general store. Most inhabitants live close to one or two of the four interstate highways which cross the prairies--I-57, 72, 74 and 55. These freeways link several Illinois cities of from 40,000 to 100,000 populations, and provide easy access to shopping, cultural activities, medical care, industrial/service jobs and "big city" life. The rich black soil of the plains provides bountiful crops of corn and soybeans, and local media--particularly television--not only hawk pesticides, insectides and fertilizers but also provide several reports each day about prices of grains and livestock. Inventories of farm equipment in the millions of dollars are not uncommon. Sitting in modern, metal equipment sheds are tractors (c. $65,000 each), harvesters (c. $120,000 each), grain hauling trucks (c. $20,000 each) and other necessary tools of modern agricultural businessmen.

Most often these farms have been owned by the same family for several generations. These owners are concerned with and support governmental activities on a number of levels: international grain markets, federal subsidies and inheritance taxes, state support for highway construction and agricultural development, and county and township government for road maintenance and land zonings. They are the supporters of local schools and their athletic teams, voters in school board and bond elections, and willing to serve on school boards. Many who now serve on these boards remember as teenagers the earlier consolidations of the 1940s and 1950s when one room schools became extinct in these

communities. Many of their surviving parents recall with some bitterness their efforts to halt the loss of Miss Evans, the wood or coal-burning stove, and their local district and its one room school.

These rural folk have also witnessed declining populations. They have watched as many of their young people left the farms for the cities or have given up farming to commute to jobs in the surrounding industrial cities. While they have diligently paid for and supported agricultural classes and shops, Future Farmers of America clubs, the 4-H and home economics facilities, returns on these investments often seem small. The maze of roads that helps get crops and cattle to transportation centers also provides opportunities for their young to see the city lights. The new enclosed shopping malls which have sprouted in the larger cities of this area, for example, are choice spots for "goofing-around." With their late model cars parked free on the acres of asphalt slabs, teenagers wearing regulation lettermen and letterwomen coats, jeans and hockey caps provide festive color and find friends and fellowship in shopping, gawking and "funning" nearly every evening. These rural young are only a few minutes away from suburban shopping and an urban mix of populations. They are already accomplished emigrants from farms and immigrants to the suburbs and cities by their senior year in high school.

This point deserves underscoring. Our usual stereotypes of rural American life and of its encounters with suburban and urban ways are misleading. These are not meetings like those satirized on the TV series, "The Beverly Hillbillies." Such a view ignores the fundamental characteristics of most small rural cities and districts in east central Illinois. As Richard Dewey pointed out in 1960,[5/] these communities may be small in size but their cultural influences are predominantly urban. What is important in understanding these communities is that

while there are some sociocultural differences between them and the larger communities in east central Illinois, the region is best viewed as skewed toward cultural values usually associated with larger cities.[6/] Rural inhabitants may find anonymity, there is a good deal of heterogeneity in the region, and a well developed division of labor. Finally, there are many formally prescribed relationships and impersonal status symbols in this region. While these five characteristics may not be as well developed as in Chicago, for example, they are clearly present in east central Illinois.

What is new to many of these people is the sharp decline in the actual numbers of young people. As illustrated in Table 2 and Table 3, in the state of Illinois school population has declined sharply. Since 1959, live births have fallen 30%, while projections of school enrollments using these figures

Insert Tables 2 and 3 about here

calculate a decline of 20% of enrollment from 1971-72 to 1985-86. In the counties of concern to this work, not surprisingly, decline has been commonplace. The largest drop has been in Douglas County (-19.1%). The summary statistics,

Insert Table 4 about here

however, suggest the grim realities of a 10% drop in enrollment in just six years in these 20 Illinois counties.

To inhabitants of these counties, such statistics suggest a scenario of more and more consolidation and of less and less local control. They lived through the end of one room schoolhouses and saw the development of grade centers serving several communities. Most have witnessed the consolidation of their small local high school into a larger consolidated high school district. One result of these multiple community high schools are athletic leagues with a total of seven teams from consolidated high schools representing a total of 19 distinct communities. Lettermen's jackets often look as if alphabet soup had

been spilled all over them. Nonetheless, for many inhabitants of these counties the future holds yet another round of consolidation.

The Process of Maramus[7/]

The steps to be described in this section seem typical of the problem-solving process followed by school districts in this region. Some boards and superintendents alleviate, and others exacerbate, this process. What is so strange about these procedures of problem solving is that there is a preordained answer--an answer few in the community desire, but inevitably end up living with.

Step 1: Administrative recognition of declining enrollment. The first recognition of declining enrollments comes to the superintendent as he calculates the levels of state funds the district is to receive for each pupil. As the enrollment figures for kindergarten and first grade are translated into state aid, the school administrator faces an actual decline in dollars.

Step 2: Initial search behavior by administrators. Most superintendents begin immediately some form of search behavior. They usually seek earlier records of the district to obtain some sense of past enrollment as well as initiate efforts to collect data on numbers of pre-school children. Rarely are these initial efforts formalized either by administrative or board sanctions. They tend to be informal reconnoitering.

Step 3: Administrative generation of policy alternatives. At this point in time the superintendent brings other district administrators into his confidence and consciously seeks to generate a list of alternative proposals. An example of such a private working paper is included in Figure 1.

Insert Figure 1 about here

In order for the education fund to balance for the 1977-78 school year $35,000.00 will either have (1) to be cut from the budget, (2) this much more income will be needed, or (3) a combination of cuts and increased income will be needed.

The Board will need to decide:

1. Whether or not a balanced budget is desired for the 1977-78 school year.

2. If a balanced budget is not desired, how much debt the board is willing to tolerate.

There is a strong possibility that the assessed valuation of land will be raised. This will provide more income, but not for two years. How much more income depends on how much the land is assessed at.

I feel it should point out that unless cuts in the program are made, the school's budget will continue to go in the red by around $35,000.00 per year.

Ask the people if they prefer to maintain the present program and run in the red. I recommend that the Board have the advisory council develop and distribute a questionnaire to the community

OR have a balanced budget and make cuts in the program
OR pass another referendum in order to keep the present program and stay out of the red
OR consider consolidation with another school district(s)

The cuts that Tom, Dick and Harry recommend are as follows:

Savings	
700.00	1. No Jr. High baseball for 1977-78 ???
750.00	2. No athletic director for 1977-78
750.00	3. Have football boys pay for one-half of their football insurance
350.00	4. Send only three board members to Chicago each year
270.00	5. Board secretary no pay
3,500.00	6. Cut out a bus route
500.00	7. Drop cross country ???
500.00	8. School will not buy tickets for coaches or boys to state tournaments
5,100.00	9. Eliminate: Mrs. Jones at Liberty
4,650.00	10. Eliminate: ½ art - Mrs. Crandall
5,100.00	11. Eliminate: ½ chorus - Mrs. Decker
5,250.00	12. Eliminate: ½ band - Mr. Brown
5,035.00	13. Eliminate: ½ time P.E. Liberty - Mrs. Green
	14. Have grades 1-4 teachers teach their own P.E. (This will enable Mrs. Green's job to be eliminated)
400.00	15. No magazines for teachers
32,855.00	

A general belt tightening will save the other $2,145.00

Figure 1
Administrative working paper for private discussion

What is clear from the initial discussions are the limited range of opportunities: (1) cut programs; (2) increase taxes; or, (3) consolidate. These recommendations suggest two arenas for conflict: financing and curriculum. At this point in time, consolidation is not discussed as a possibility.

Step 4. Superintendent - school board discussion. This step marks the beginnings of public discussions. The superintendent and his fellow administrators now present the school board with the problems of declining enrollment: less programs or more monies. In this presentation administrators are indirectly assisted by state department of education and regional accreditation regulations as well as state legislature decision's on per pupil funding. This session, and others of a more informal nature, winnow the recommendations brought by administrators.

Step 5: School board controlled public discussion. With the discussion in the marketplace, the board assumes the role of seeking to strike compromises between cuts needed and taxes to be levied. The board members engage in gossip with neighbors, reflect with community elders about problems of earlier consolidations, and check with economically influential residents about their tolerances for tax increases.

It is at this point that some of our understandings about smaller rural communities and their politics are useful. Discussions of issues in these districts are marked by well understood norms which stress the right of some to be influential, the right to appeal to familial or kinship ties, and the right to argue for the preservation of a well-developed and constructed web of social relations.

Yet, in these communities two factions seemed at work. One faction stressed "an immediate sense of collective aggrievement, accompanied by a heighten sense of identification with the group and a readiness to invest time, resources and

energy in collective activities."[8] A general rallying around the flag occurred, with intensive and frequent interactions among those who felt wronged.

The second faction developed through the slow formation of an opposing coalition, made up of those who did not like the present school situation[9] and those who oppose the majority in-group in the community. These unlikely bed fellows seem to come slowly to the conflict, wary that their opinions are no where near a majority. They are also cautious because unlike their opponents they were easily fragmented.

Step 6: School board meeting. Within two months of the initial superintendent-board discussion, the board usually holds a formal meeting for the purpose of discussing and deciding what will be done. At the meeting, the board usually distributes one or two information sheets to citizens. Two examples are presented as Figures 2 and 3.

Insert Figure 2 and 3 about here

The following courses are required by the state:

1. 3 years of English
2. health education
3. 1 year of U.S. History
4. driver education
5. physical education
6. consumer education

The XYZ district requires 2 years of science and 1 year of math, in addition to the state requirements.

In addition the University of Illinois has patterns it requires. These patterns will be explained verbally.

The following athletic teams are available:

High School - boys	girls
Football	Volleyball
Basketball	Basketball
Track	Track
Cross-Country	

Jr. High - boys	girls
Basketball	Track
Baseball	
Track	

The school belongs to the North Central Association.

We have:

- 5 cooks
- 5 bus routes
- 1 nurse
- 1 noon hour supervisor

The school pays for insurance for football players.

The school buys 2 magazines (professional journals) for each teacher per year.

Field trips:

Fan buses:

Figure 2

Example of public handout for board meeting

FACT SHEET

DECLINING ENROLLMENT

ENROLLMENT DATE	NUMBER OF STUDENTS*	STAFF	CHANGE
FEB. 1971	1980	88	—
FEB. 1972	1970	87	-10
FEB. 1973	1882	89	-88
FEB. 1974	1834	88	-48
FEB. 1975	1729	84	-105
FEB. 1976	1610	83	-119
FEB. 1977	1579	81	-31
AUG. 1977**	1469	75	-110
			511

* DOES NOT INCLUDE SPECIAL ED. STUDENTS (APPROX. 42 PER YEAR)

** ANTICIPATED...COULD BE LESS! MAY NOT REGISTER 120 KINDERGARTEN STUDENTS. (WILL GRADUATE 230 THIS JUNE)

TOTAL STUDENTS LOST SINCE 1971.....511 STUDENTS

REDUCTION IN STAFF FROM 1973 HIGH OF 89..... 14 TEACHERS

TEACHER-STUDENT RATIO.....1977-1978..... 19.59 STU/TEACH

PROJECTED LOSS 1978-79..... 94 STUDENTS

PROJECTED LOSS 1979-80..... 88 STUDENTS

(GREEN OAKS SUBDIVISION COULD GIVE US SOME STUDENTS BEGINNING LATE 1979 OR EARLY 1980.....HOW DOES ONE JUDGE HOW HOMES WILL SELL AND HOW MANY STUDENTS WILL ENTER?)

Figure 3

Example of public handout for board meeting

These handouts outline the major conditions the board believes pertinent to their decision-making. For instance, in Figure 2 the handout describes state required courses, athletic teams and miscellaneous items. These items are in reality tokens for negotiation, just as some state required courses are non-negotiable. In Figure 3, the board accentuates the district-wide decline of students as well as hopes for future in-migrations.

At this meeting, those seeking to preserve the community and its school stress the need for local autonomy, for preservation of the community and the artificial nature of many state regulations. Opponents of this position push for improved educational opportunities for students and chide the opposition leadership for failing "to lead."

Step 7: School board decision. The public meeting helps board members as decisions crystallize public opinion. Most members have senses of where they stand, but strong opposition to a cut or support for a project in a public meeting often upsets earlier predilections. These meetings are much like New England town meetings, with press for reasonable trade-offs and norms of consensus. Overt displays of anger or frustration are discouraged, even if the "wrong" decisions are reached.

Step 8: Continued declining enrollments. Despite the decisions reached in step seven, the trend of demographic change continues to push the board and community toward consideration of either closing a school or consolidating with another district.

Step 9: Superintendent-board discussions about alternatives. These discussions usually develop from informal discussions, often without the benefit of other administrators or lay persons involvement. The topic is simply: what can we do in face of continued declining enrollments? Whether the answer is closing or consolidating with another district, this question raises four issues

of potentially rancorous conflict for the district. These questions are:

1) Who are going to be the winners and the losers? For instance, what children will be bused who previously walked? What will be the colors, mascot and name of new athletic teams? Where will the school buildings be located?

2) What is going to happen to the social matrix of the community now that the school and its activities are gone? For example, how will the Christmas pageant take place? Can rivalries with the other communities be forgotten in the "new" district?

3) Why haven't the leaders of the community and school been more dynamic in re-vitalizing the community? For example, why haven't conscious efforts been made to attract new industries, to become sites for state facilities such as prisons, or to lobby with state officials to change accreditation statutes for smaller schools? Some in the opposing faction dwell on this point, preparing for the next set of elections.

4) What happens to tried-and-true educators who have lived long and served well the schools? For example, will they be happy in new district schools apart from their home and students? How will the PTA be able to provide help for their school, teachers and children?

Step 10. Public acrimony over the closing of a school/consolidation with another district. The four questions become part of the agenda of public discussion. Closings and consolidations provide quantifiable standards for some to judge whether they have won or lost. Winning or losing involves not only the placement of the school building or school colors, but also the opportunity to maintain and increase or to gain and obtain political power in the community. Some community figures become scapegoats, attacked with great emotion because they are not "country." Finally, many express concerns for the future of their

teachers, suggesting not only a loss of continuity in values and tradition but also a loss of income for the entire community.

These conflicts burn brightly. Efforts to cool the situation, to apply rational decision processes are often trampled. Those who see no other way than to close or to consolidate retreat both to criteria provided by the state or by accreditation agencies, and to the economic sacrifices which would have to be made to keep alive an extremely small school. Those who see the continuing wasting away of their community lash out at experts, outsiders and non-believers. They find enemies in those who see their schools as inadequate, their teachers old-fashioned and their towns as "one-horse burgs."

Step 11: School board meeting to close the school/consolidate the district. Once again the board meets in public session to decide. These meetings seem to follow a pattern: the resolution, an emotional tirade of feeling, a recess, and a vote to close/consolidate. These are forums for public catharsis, the questions and answers resembling a catechism of dissolution: a catechism that is all too well understood.

The meeting ends, the school closes or the districts consolidate. Some of those who supported these steps now believe that they have helped create better educational opportunities for the children of the community. While some may ride several miles in a bus to school next year, these students will have opportunities in course selection and extra curricular activities no longer available in their old school. Others who supported the consolidation have gained an important political victory, and hope to continue in unseating the current political regime. Opponents will see an important link to the past and a crucial strand of the web of community life destroyed. They may find small comfort in the newer instructional methods, innovative curriculum or change-

oriented teachers. Equally, these opponents of consolidation sense impending political conflicts on the horizon, conflicts which may result in the end of their political leadership.

Toward An Interpretation

The temptations of explaining these events either as part of an urban-rural conflict or a persistent liberal-conservative rift must be resisted. Equally, the chance to be an apologist for or an antagonist of small public schools must be forsaken. Unlike those who seek to propagate these positions, my interest is in understanding the educational politics of the process of rural modernization. Unlike those who find great virtues in smaller schools and districts, such as Sher and Tompkins,[10/] not all school district consolidations need intensive study. While I do agree with much of their debunking of the technical trappings of consolidation, I am appalled at Sher and Tompkins unwillingness to explore either the political dimensions of the symbols of technology or the implicit political dynamics they support indirectly in resisting consolidation. We need to understand better both why promising economies of scale is so politically persuasive and why those who resist consolidation may do so because of the political, not educational, costs they may incur or benefits they may gain.

Within the larger context of rural modernization, one perspective of interest would be the suggestion that those who chose to live and to defend life in small rural districts and cities have chosen to be members of a minority group, subject to intense discrimination. Those who are not of smaller communities, but who still chose to defend them, see smaller communities and their residents as part of an endangered species. Three aspects of this perspective deserve comment.

First, while these minority group members are often economically well-off, while they are often protected by federal and state legislation along economic lines, they are increasingly losers in political struggles to allocate resources, symbols and values. They ponder farmer strikes, see television which glorifies the middle-class suburban family, and watch their agrarian values inundated by obviously urban values. Rural inhabitants are constantly harassed and defeated by the bearers of city culture. As Vidich and Bensman noted:

> The inalterable decision which represents a victory for the outside world may be accepted without any further talk or mention being made of it, as if in denial of its existence. A defeat is turned to victory or is twisted in a way to make it appear to be an advantage for the community either by forgetting the central (and lost) issue or by emphasizing peripheral and psuedo issues: thus the subsidy or the state-supported road is always a victory over urban life.11/

As minority group members, these ruralists revise history to fit their needs.

These revisions have impact on what takes place in schools. The outside experts, e.g., superintendents, who come to serve are ridiculed, badgered, and bilked.12/ They simply do not last very long in these communities.13/ While this attack on alien expertise may be functional for those who chose to stay, it may ultimately lead those who leave for urban life to become too enamored with the values of urban living. Those who have "fled" may look back in anger, with little sense of protecting an endangered minorities species. Hence, struggles in political bodies such as legislatures may well reflect those who love too passionately the rural life and those who remember too well its narrowness, provincialism and traditionalism. The psuedo-technology of consolidation may well be one way of punishing those who chose to live in rural areas.

Second, minority group status insures limitations of the school and its curriculum.14/ The school and the alternatives it offers must inspire stability through an understanding of being an insider, not aspiration through faint hints

of what could be achieved as an outsider. Students and teachers must see the outside world as "a good place to visit, but a place nobody would want to live." What develops is an ideology in and around the school which condones accepting second-rate textbooks, teachers, ideas and ideals. To aspire to first-rate status in anything other than athletics or music is to upset the ecology of inferior status. Excellence is sought and honored only in those events which preserve the particularistic pride of a town. Individuals who ask for too much endanger both the group by revealing hidden potential and themselves by inviting majority ridicule.

Hence, the community and its school play games constantly with outside bureaucratic officials. Inspection teams from state agencies or regional accrediting agencies are pruned of those from "different" types of schools. Elaborate rituals of town pride, school pep and athletic or musical prominence are highlighted, while National Merit Scholars are few and far between. Teachers who grew up in the community or sister communities are welcome, as are wives of local farmers. The school, therefore, is a vital factor in socialization of the young to minority status: it is this function which is protected most by normal school politics in smaller districts.[15/]

How much longer these politics will be tolerated by state agencies or by militant teacher organizations are important questions. The rapid professionalizing of state departments of education, for example, may result in the domination of policy-making by those who are technocratically trained and who are not sympathetic to the values of small community life. Equally, as teacher organizations become increasingly the masters of the training, certification and in-service development of teachers, they may have to look long and hard at the qualifications of small community teachers.

Third, and finally, the status of minority group helps explain some of the necessity for consolidation. For those who accept minority status, the future is bleak. There are no new streams of like-minded newcomers and fewer significant references to the "old country." Lacking these visible symbols, those who live in these small districts have fewer and fewer weapons to resist assimilation and acculturation. Much of their passion about resisting consolidation carries with it the clear recognition that they are an endangered and vanishing species. On the other hand, the majority culture finds these rural districts important reference groups. They serve not as aspiration points, but as ways of understanding that as moderns we have overcome the past. Farmers or the inhabitants of smaller rural communities are markers of what moderns do not want or wish to be: they stand as symbols of ancient civilizations, as living museums.

This urban rationality may lead either to the destruction or to the preservation of small communities and their schools. On the one hand, the rationality of those who represent urban cultures may reject the notion that those who live in smaller rural communities have been mistreated enough by Nature to deserve no further punishment from their fellow man. The press for equality of access, of process and perhaps of outcomes in schools may overcome values which urge preserving differences. On the other hand, others of an urban bent may wish to preserve small rural communities and schools because they are elements of important endangered species. The price paid for a few anachronistic schools and communities is small and well worth minor inconveniences.

For those who live in these communities in east central Illinois, the facts of demography make political action difficult. Banding together to get legislative help is hard because the legislature is dominated by suburban representatives and because fewer and fewer in their communities care about consolidation

because their children have already completed school. Hence, inhabitants of these communities see technocratic planners in legislature and state departments of education dominating policy formulation. These enemies of rural communities seem to adhere to only one criterion: cost.

In sum, as members of a minority group, the inhabitants of east central Illinois communities find themselves with so few political resources that they are constantly losing political battles. They are hard pressed to maintain control over local institutions which aim at preserving their way of life. Finally, they are at the mercy often of those who find them either as "obsolete" or those who find them "interesting." Neither of these views does much to enhance the sense of worth of those who chose to live in rural communities.

Table 1*

Public School Systems and Pupils Enrolled,
By Size of System: 1961-62 and 1971-72

Enrollment Size (Number of Pupils)	School Systems			
	1961-62		1971-72	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
150 to 299	3,081	8.3	1,645	9.5
50 to 149	4,214	11.4	1,416	8.2
15 to 49	6,581	17.8	905	5.3
1 to 14	4,632	12.5	770	4.5
None	6,031	16.3	378	2.2
Total 0-299	24,539	66.3	5,112	29.7
Grand Total	37,025	100.0	17,238	100.0

* The National Center for Education Statistics, The Condition of Education: A Statistical Report on the Condition of Education in the United States. 1976 Edition. Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1976, page 186. Abridged.

Table 2*

Annual Number of Illinois Residents Live Births, 1947-1973

Year	Number of Live Births	Index of Live Births (1959=100)
1947	196,007	81.7
1949	189,313	78.9
1951	201,082	83.8
1953	206,813	86.2
1955	220,541	91.9
1957	238,579	99.5
1959	239,871	100.0
1961	237,051	98.8
1963	224,787	93.7
1965	208,063	86.6
1967	195,644	81.6
1969	195,699	81.5
1971	195,311	81.4
1973	168,992	70.5

* Harold E. Brown, Chairman, Report of the Task Force on Declining Enrollments in the Public Schools. Springfield: State Board of Education, December, 1975, page 3. Abridged.

Table 3

Illinois Fall Public School Enrollment Projections, 1975-1985

School Year	Kindergarten	Elementary (K-8)	Secondary 9-12	Total Enrollment	% Change from 1971-72
1971-72	175,141	1,678,517	695,142	2,273,659	
1973-74	162,690	1,600,486	711,311	2,311,797	-2.6
		PROJECTIONS			
1975-76	171,345	1,534,721	722,247	2,256,968	-4.9
1977-78	147,614	1,464,114	707,571	2,171,685	-8.5
1979-80	140,263	1,385,296	673,002	2,058,298	-13.3
1981-82	145,250	1,342,053	628,665	1,970,718	-17.0
1983-84	150,977	1,317,338	597,232	1,914,570	-19.3
1985-86	156,621	1,294,463	599,957	1,894,420	-20.2

* Harold E. Brown, Chairman. Report of the Task Force on Declining Enrollments in the Public Schools. Springfield: State Board of Education, December, 1975, page 10. Abridged.

Table 4*

Projected 1975 and 1977 Enrollments as a Percentage of 1971 Enrollment, by Selected Counties

County	1975 Enrollment Change	1977 Enrollment Change
Champaign	- 7.6	- 8.9
Christian	- 5.1	-10.7
Clark	- 7.9	- 5.4
Coles	- 9.5	-12.4
Cumberland	- 1.4	- 6.4
DeWitt	- 5.9	-13.8
Douglas	-11.5	-19.1
Edgar	- 0.3	- 5.9
Effingham	- 1.4	- 6.6
Fayette	- 7.7	-12.4
Ford	- 9.7	-17.5
Iroquois	- 6.4	-12.4
Jasper	- 5.9	-12.4
Livingston	- 8.4	-13.7
Logan	- 7.7	- 9.9
McLean	- 4.2	- 4.6
Macon	- 3.5	- 5.4
Piatt	- 7.3	-13.8
Shelby	- 4.1	-12.4
Vermilion	- 5.9	-10.6
Mean	- 5.78	-10.40
S.D.	3.24	4.80
N=20		

*Statistics Section, Declining Elementary and Secondary Enrollments in Illinois: An Overview of the Implications. Springfield: Illinois Office of Education, February, 1975, page 21. Abridged.

Footnotes

1. This paper synthesizes discusisons over the last two years with six classes of AHCE 468: School-Community Relations. I am grateful to these many students for their willingness to describe and to analyze problems in their districts. In this work, I have drawn on these discussions and the final papers of all these students, but particularly Marcia Johnson, Linda Kastingar, Scott Mayer, Larry Macari, Paul Mussario, Robert Patterson and Kenneth Peterson. Finally, I am soley responsible for much of the interpretation drawn from these discussions.
2. William Dorfman and Lynette Ferrara, Social and Economic Characteristics of U.S. School Districts, 1970, NCES 76-205. Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1975, page 98.
3. Joseph M. Cronin, Illinois Education in 1975/Progress & Problems. Springfield: Illinois Office of Education, 1975, Appendix F.
4. Martin Burlingame, An Exploratory Study of Turnover and Career Mobility of Public School District Superintendents in the State of Illinois from 1960-1976. Springfield: Illinois State Board of Education, Reference Document C128, August 1977, pages 12-14.
5. Richard Dewey, "The Rural-Urban Continuum: Real but Relatively Unimportant," American Journal of Sociology, 66 (July, 1960), pages 60-66.
6. Ibid., page 65. Dewey lists these five qualities as (1) Anonymity; (2) Division of labor; (3) Heterogeneity, induced and maintained by (1) and (2); (4) Impersonal and formally prescribed relationships; and, (5) Symbols of status which are independent of personal acquaintance.

7. Maramus: a wasting away. The concept is from Samuel P. Huntington, "The Maramus of the ICC," In Edward V. Schneir (Ed.), Policy-Making in American Government. New York: Basic Books, 1969, pages 281-302.

While no single district studied by students have gone through the entire process of maramus during the time studied, the overlapping of stages in nearly all districts is clear. What differences most is the number of times steps one through six are repeated.

8. Robert A. Scott, "Deviance, Sanctions, and Social Integration in Small-Scale Societies," Social Forces, 54 (March, 1976), page 609.

9. L. Harmon Zeigler, M. Kent Jennings and G. Wayne Peak, Governing American Schools: Political Interaction in Local School Districts. North Scituate, Mass.: Duxbury Press, 1974, pages 212-216.

10. Jonathan P. Sher and Rachel B. Tompkins, Economy, Efficiency, and Equality: The Myths of Rural School and District Consolidation. Washington, D.C.: National Institute of Education, July, 1976.

11. Arthur J. Vidich and Joseph Bensman, Small Town in Mass Society: Class, Power and Religion in a Rural Community. Revised Edition. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1968, page 295.

12. Burlingame, op. cit. Also see Zeigler, Jennings and Peak, op. cit., pages 177-178.

13. Vidich and Bensman, op. cit.

14. Alan Peshkin, "Whom Shall the Schools Serve? Some Dilemmas of Local Control in a Rural School District," Curriculum Inquiry, 6 (1977), pages 199-201.

15. Ibid.